United Nations A/63/796

General Assembly

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Sixty-third session
Agenda item 104 (e)
Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of eighteen members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 29 January 2009 from the Permanent Mission of Uruguay to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

The Permanent Mission of Uruguay to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Permanent Missions of the Member States of the United Nations and has the honour to refer to note C013/2007 in which the Permanent Mission of Uruguay presented its candidacy for re-election to the Human Rights Council in the elections that will be held during the sixty-third session of the General Assembly, in May 2009.

Uruguay wishes to reiterate its full support for the Human Rights Council, a body created for the purpose of strengthening the United Nations system for the promotion, respect and protection of human rights.

The effective exercise of human rights and their enjoyment by all the people remains a central concern and a priority for the Uruguayan State. In our country, the essential elements for the defence of the highest standards in the promotion, respect and protection of human rights have been enshrined in the National Constitution and have also been regulated by law since 1825.

During the past three years, new and important advances have been made in human rights legislation, specifically the creation of the Honorary Commission against Racism, Xenophobia and all other forms of Discrimination; the adoption of the law on cooperation with the International Criminal Court with respect to combating genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity (establishing universal jurisdiction); adoption of the Refugee Statute; the amendment of the National Children and Adolescents' Code, with the inclusion of the prohibition of corporal punishment for minors; adoption of the act on equal rights and opportunities for men and women; adoption of the act on migration and the criminalization of the crimes of trafficking in persons.

The delegation of Uruguay, which, like many other delegations, played a very active role in the negotiating process that culminated in the establishment of the

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Human Rights Council, supported the inclusion of "voluntary pledges and commitments" by candidates for membership in the Council, on the understanding that it was a means to encourage international commitments in that area on a voluntary basis.

In keeping with a principle of such importance, the Government of Uruguay, as it once again submits its candidacy to the Human Rights Council, wishes to update its voluntary pledges and contributions to protect and promote human rights made in 2006:

Ratification of or accession to new international human rights instruments

In fulfilment of its pledge to ratify or accede to new international human rights instruments, the Government of Uruguay ratified the United Nations Convention against Corruption (Act No. 18.056), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Act No. 18.418) and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (Act No. 18.420).

Uruguay has also ratified regional human rights instruments, such as the MERCOSUR Protocol on the Commitment to the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and regional conventions on migration, terrorism and the rights of youth.

Uruguay reaffirms its pledge to ratify or accede to new international human rights instruments, encouraging ratification by parliament of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Cooperation with the Human Rights Council

As part of the responsibilities it assumed upon becoming a member of the body, Uruguay pledges to continue to cooperate fully with the Council to give priority to human rights questions within the United Nations system.

Promotion of a spirit of cooperation and genuine dialogue to ensure an operational focus on cooperation and prevention, avoiding protection of violators of anyone's human rights, at any time, in any situation and in any region.

Substantive interaction with special procedures and mechanisms

Continuing the standing invitation to the special thematic procedures to visit the country and the pledge to collaborate fully with those procedures and to ensure that it remains open to international scrutiny

The visit of the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Manfred Nowak, is planned for late March 2009.

Preparation of reports for treaty bodies

After the report for the universal periodic review, in 2009 Uruguay will prepare, with a view to their forthcoming submission, the reports for the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the Committee against Torture and the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, as well as to the Committee on the Rights of the Child

on the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

Collaboration to ensure that all human, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development, receive equal treatment, on the understanding that human rights cannot be attained fully without ensuring sustainable human development based on equity and social justice.

Promotion of the principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity as pillars of the Council's work

Relationship with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Uruguay will continue to cooperate closely with OHCHR in the fulfilment of its mandate, with the aim of helping it to address the wide range of human rights issues facing the international community.

On 24 December 2008, Act No. 18.446 was promulgated to create a National Human Rights Institution, having received the support of the Office in the design and approval process.

Full support for the effective participation of civil society, including non-governmental organizations, in the Human Rights Council, recognizing its fundamental role in the human rights system.

In addition to that pledge, the Government of Uruguay has included civil society in the preparation of reports for monitoring bodies, and in the follow-up of their recommendations.

New York, 29 January 2009

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Sixty-third session
Agenda item 104 (c)
Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of eighteen members of the Human Rights Council

Letter dated 24 March 2009 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to attach hereto the aide-memoire on the voluntary pledges and commitments of the Russian Federation in the context of elections to the United Nations Human Rights Council (see annex). I request that this aide-memoire be issued as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 104 (c).

(*Signed*) Vitaly **Churkin**

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Annex to the letter dated 24 March 2009 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Russian]

Candidacy of the Russian Federation for re-election to the United Nations Human Rights Council for 2009-2012

The Russian Federation has been a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council from the time of its establishment in 2006. Its first term of membership expires in June 2009, and pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/251, the Russian Federation has decided to put forward its candidacy for re-election to the Council for the period 2009-2012 under the quota for the Group of Eastern European States.

The Russian Federation is firmly attached to such fundamental values as freedom, justice, life, well-being and human dignity, family traditions, political diversity, integrity of the court system, responsibility of leadership, social guarantees and the eradication of poverty and corruption, as well as to its international obligations in the field of human rights. We continue to pursue a policy of the further strengthening of democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Our efforts at the domestic level are aimed in particular at the following:

(a) Ensuring broad participation of citizens, political parties and other social institutions in the shaping of State policy, including decision-making;

(b) Creating a qualitatively new legal system and promoting integrity of the court system in order to eradicate corruption and ensure the rule of law;

(c) Further expanding economic and entrepreneurial freedom;

(d) Giving effect to the social guarantees embodied in the Constitution;

(e) Supporting the national traditions and cultures of the peoples of Russia as a principal factor in harmony within society, unity of the nation and the stable development of the country.

At the international level, we see our tasks as the following:

(a) To achieve respect for human rights and freedoms throughout the world through constructive international dialogue on the basis of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the utilization of other possibilities, including at the regional level, in the human rights field, and also of rejection of double standards and respect for the national and historical characteristics of each State in the process of democratic transformations without the imposition on anyone of borrowed value systems;

(b) Promotion of the strengthening of international legality, which is based on compliance by States with their national constitutions and their obligations under international treaties;

(c) Firm opposition to the phenomena of neo-fascism, any forms of racial discrimination, aggressive nationalism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia, and to

attempts to rewrite history and use it for purposes of inciting confrontation and revanchism in world politics, or to subject to revision the results of the Second World War;

(d) To develop, inter alia by utilizing the resources, potential and initiatives of civil society institutions in the sphere of public diplomacy, international cultural and humanitarian cooperation as a means of instituting a dialogue between civilizations, achieving harmony and ensuring mutual understanding among peoples while paying special attention to interreligious dialogue;

(e) To develop cooperation with international and non-governmental human rights organizations for purposes of strengthening universal norms of human rights protection free of double standards, and coupling them with the responsibility of individuals for their actions, above all in terms of preventing offence to the feelings of believers and inculcating tolerance and strengthening moral principles in the human rights dialogue;

(f) To expand participation in international human rights treaties and bring the legislation of the Russian Federation into line with them.

The Russian Federation is convinced that the standards and principles embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights must be consistently implemented throughout the world. In order to attain this objective, there is a need to focus the efforts of all parties to international agreements on strengthening dialogue and cooperation and involving those concerned in a collective process of developing and adopting decisions. The principal motive force of this process must be the United Nations, and in particular the Human Rights Council.

The Russian Federation is convinced that the Council's activity must promote the development of constructive inter-State cooperation, the protection of human rights, and the strengthening of the international regime of respect for human rights on the basis of justice and equality of rights in accordance with the purposes and principles embodied in the Charter of the United Nations. The Russian Federation is sure that human rights are called upon to become a factor in facilitating rapprochement among various States and groups of States, and also in strengthening the climate of confidence and mutual respect in international relations.

If elected to the Council, the Russian Federation will work actively to make it an effective and efficacious instrument for encouraging and protecting human rights throughout the world, and to incorporate in its work the fundamental principles of universality, non-selectivity, objectivity, equal treatment of all categories of human rights and respect for the diversity of cultures and civilizations.

The Russian Federation provides every possible support for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and for the High Commissioner, making an annual contribution of $2 million to the Office's budget. A framework agreement like which nothing else so far exists has been concluded between Russia and the Office. This agreement incorporates an understanding for the development on a long-term basis of cooperation between the Russian Federation and OHCHR in such areas as ensuring the rule of law, promoting equality and tolerance, and developing a system of education in the human rights field. The Russian Federation is consistently implementing this agreement in practice.

An important component of the Russian Federation's policy is active cooperation with the special procedures system of the Human Rights Council. In recent years our country has been visited by a number of mandate holders under that system, most recently by the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, and the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers. Further visits are also planned. In addition, the Russian Federation is cooperating actively with regional institutions and mechanisms in the human rights field, inter alia within the framework of the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Baltic Sea States.

Russia is a party to six core international human rights treaties: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racism, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Our country submits to the relevant human rights treaty bodies in a timely manner periodic reports on the implementation of the provisions of the above instruments.

In 2008, the Russian Federation signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. It is our firm intention to broaden the range of our relevant obligations.

As part of its obligations as a member of the Human Rights Council, in February 2008 the Russian Federation successfully participated in the Universal Periodic Review provided for in General Assembly resolution 60/251 of 15 March 2006.

In view of the foregoing, we believe that our partners in the General Assembly will support the candidacy of the Russian Federation for re-election to the United Nations Human Rights Council for the period 2009-2012.

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General Assembly
Sixty-third session
Agenda item 10
Report of the Peacebuilding Commission

Security Council
Sixty-fourth year

Letter dated 25 March 2009 from the Chairperson of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Chairperson of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission to the President of the General Assembly, the President of the Security Council and the President of the Economic and Social Council

We have the honour to transmit to you the conclusions of the Peacebuilding Commission, as issued under the symbol PBC/3/BDI/3 in all official languages, following the second review meeting on the implementation of the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Burundi.

(*Signed*) Heraldo **Muñoz**
Chairperson
Peacebuilding Commission

(*Signed*) Anders **Lidén**
Chairperson
Burundi configuration
Peacebuilding Commission

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Report of the Peacebuilding Commission

Security Council
Sixty-fourth year

Letter dated 25 March 2009 from the Chairperson of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Chairperson of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission to the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

We have the honour to transmit to you the conclusions of the Peacebuilding Commission, as issued under the symbol PBC/3/BDI/3 in all official languages, following the second review meeting on the implementation of the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Burundi.

(*Signed*) Heraldo **Muñoz**
Chairperson
Peacebuilding Commission

(*Signed*) Anders **Lidén**
Chairperson
Burundi configuration
Peacebuilding Commission

* Reissued for technical reasons.

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Sixty-third session
Agenda item 10
Report of the Peacebuilding Commission

Security Council
Sixty-fourth year

Letter dated 6 January 2009 from the President of the Security Council to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to refer to Security Council resolution 1646 (2005), adopted on 20 December 2005, in which the Council, in keeping with its resolution 1645 (2005), adopted on the same date, decided that the permanent members listed in Article 23, paragraph 1, of the Charter of the United Nations should be members of the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission and that, in addition, the Council should annually select two of its elected members to participate in the Organizational Committee.

I therefore have the honour to inform you that, following informal consultations on 6 January 2009, the members of the Security Council agreed on the selection of Burkina Faso and Mexico as the two elected members of the Council to participate in the Organizational Committee for a term of one year, until the end of 2009.

(*Signed*) Jean-Maurice **Ripert**
President of the Security Council

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Sixty-third session
Agenda item 104 (c)
Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of eighteen members of the Human Rights Council

Letter dated 25 March 2009 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

I would like to inform you that the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan has presented its candidature for re-election to the Human Rights Council for the term 2009-2012 at the elections to be held in May 2009 during the sixty-third session of the General Assembly.

Azerbaijan regards the protection and promotion of human rights as an issue of priority for its internal and foreign policy agenda. I therefore have the honour to submit an aide-memoire outlining the voluntary pledges and commitments of the Republic of Azerbaijan with respect to the human rights issues, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251 (see annex).

(*Signed*) Agshin **Mehdiyev**
Permanent Representative

09-28878 (E) 080409

Annex to the letter dated 25 March 2009 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Aide-memoire on the candidature of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Human Rights Council 2009-2012

1. Azerbaijan has put forward its candidature for re-election to the Human Rights Council at the elections to be held in May 2009, during the sixty-third session of the General Assembly. It is the view of Azerbaijan that its membership in the Council since 2006 until now, which coincided with the Council's institutional building process, calls for continuation of the country's close participation in its work in order to further contribute to the development of a credible, efficient and vibrant human rights body.

2. Azerbaijan regards the protection and promotion of human rights as an issue of priority for its internal and foreign policy agenda. It assumes that peace and security, development and human rights are cornerstones of the contemporary international relations, while the rule of law, democracy and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms are key pillars for national development.

3. All human rights and fundamental freedoms set forth in the international documents are enshrined in the Constitution of Azerbaijan. Since regaining its independence in 1991, Azerbaijan became a party to almost all major universal and regional human rights treaties, including seven core United Nations instruments that have established the monitoring mechanism on the implementation of their relevant provisions.

4. Azerbaijan has consistently fulfilled its obligation to report under these treaties to the relevant human rights treaty monitoring bodies and has undertaken follow-up measures based on their recommendations.

5. Azerbaijan has recognized the competence of all human rights treaty monitoring bodies to receive and consider communications from individuals or groups of individuals subject to its jurisdiction who claim to be victims of a violation of any of the rights set forth in the relevant human rights instruments.

6. Special emphasis is given to the implementation of the commitments under the human rights instruments, including those enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and in the human rights treaties adopted within the framework of the Council of Europe.

7. The Government of Azerbaijan has been closely cooperating with the special procedures of the Human Rights Council. It has extended invitations to various mandate holders, thus expressing its readiness to cooperate with them further in the coming years. Azerbaijan is committed to the idea of granting standing invitation to all special procedures.

8. During its membership on the Council, Azerbaijan continued to advance the protection of human rights at the national level and to contribute to international efforts in this field. Several important measures have been taken in the country during recent years, such as the ongoing reforms of the judicial and penitentiary systems, the revision of the Election and Penal Codes, in accordance with the

recommendations of the international organizations, the adoption of the national plan of action for the protection of human rights for 2006-2010 by the presidential decree of 28 December 2006 and the declaration of 18 June as Human Rights Day in Azerbaijan.

9. At the international level, in line with its overall support for the United Nations activities in the field of human rights, Azerbaijan fully supported the reform of the existing United Nations human rights machinery and financially contributed to strengthening of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

10. Azerbaijan views the concept of dialogue in a broad sense of the word, to comprise, inter alia, interaction with civil society and non-governmental organizations, the special procedures of the Human Rights Council, as well as dialogue among civilizations. Contribution to broadening dialogue among civilizations, cultures and religions was one of the voluntary commitments taken by Azerbaijan during its election to the Council for 2006-2009. As a country located at the crossroads of the East and the West, and with its long history of harmonious coexistence between different cultural and religious groups, Azerbaijan has been an active supporter and implementer of different international initiatives aimed at achieving this goal. Outcomes of the conference of the Organization of the Islamic Conference on the "Role of the Media in the Development of Tolerance and Mutual Understanding", held in Baku from 26 to 28 April 2007, and International Forum on "Expanding the Role of Women in Cross-cultural Dialogue", held in Baku on 10 and 11 May 2008, have immensely contributed to the process of highlighting the roles of different sectors of society, including public and commercial media, communication and media training institutions, and other organizations and individuals, in particular the input of women in improving dialogue and mutual understanding among religious and cultural communities.

11. Azerbaijan is also actively engaged in activities aimed at fighting racism and racial discrimination. It served as vice-chair at the Durban Conference, held in South Africa in 2001, and contributed to the drafting of its final outcome documents. Azerbaijan has closely followed the work of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the effective implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and takes an active part in the work of the Preparatory Committee for the Durban Review Conference, which is scheduled to take place from 20 to 24 April 2009.

12. At the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in 2004, in line with its strong commitment to the promotion of gender equality and the advancement of women, Azerbaijan, as a member of the Bureau of the Council, successfully facilitated the consultations and adoption, without a vote, of resolution 2004/4, entitled "Review of Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2 on mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system". At both the national and international levels, Azerbaijan proceeds on the basis of the interrelated, interdependent, indivisible and mutually reinforcing nature of all human rights, including the right to development. Azerbaijan believes that there can be no hierarchy among human rights, and that equal focus should be placed on all such rights.

13. On this understanding, Azerbaijan was an active supporter of the mandate of the Working Group on an optional protocol to the International Covenant on

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which successfully managed the task of elaborating the Optional Protocol to the Covenant.

14. Azerbaijan intends to make further contributions to United Nations action in the field of human rights and to support the strengthening of the United Nations human rights machinery, in particular the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and stresses its commitment to continue its active participation in the work of the Human Rights Council in the spirit of dialogue and cooperation.

15. During the short period of its membership on the Human Rights Council, Azerbaijan has actively contributed to its work. The Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations Office at Geneva was elected as Vice-President and Rapporteur of the Council for 2008-2009, and one of the country's leading human rights experts was elected to the Council's Advisory Committee. Azerbaijan initiated adoption of the resolutions on "Protection of cultural rights and property in situations of armed conflict" and "Missing persons", which received unanimous support of the Council at its sixth and seventh sessions, respectively. Moreover, as the main co-sponsor of the resolution on "Missing persons", Azerbaijan was responsible for the organization of the panel discussion on the matter, which was held in the framework of the ninth session of the Council in September 2008.

16. If re-elected to the Human Rights Council, Azerbaijan will, inter alia, actively contribute to its work, proceeding from the necessity of the realization of all human rights, including the right to development, as well as of rationalizing the system of special procedures. Azerbaijan will continue to place special focus on gender equality, the advancement of women and the rights of the child, as well as on the protection and promotion of human rights of other vulnerable groups.

17. At the national level, Azerbaijan reiterates its readiness to continue its cooperation with the mandate holders of the Council's special procedures, the treaty monitoring bodies and the universal periodic review mechanism and to take measures in line with their recommendations and concluding observations.

18. Azerbaijan has already fulfilled the following commitments and pledges taken on the threshold of its election to the Human Rights Council for 2006-2009:

(a) Ms. A. Jahangir, Special Rapporteur on the freedom of religion or belief (26 February-5 March), Mr. W. Kalin, Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of internally displaced persons (2-6 April 2007), and Mr. A. Liqabo, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression (22-28 April 2007), have visited Azerbaijan, while the dates of the visit of Mr. L. Despouy, Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, have already been set;

(b) Azerbaijan has served as the regional coordinator of the Eastern European Group and Bureau member during the sixty-second session of the Commission on Human Rights, as well as during the first and second sessions of the Human Rights Council;

(c) At the last, historic, session of the Commission on Human Rights, the delegation of Azerbaijan, in its capacity of regional coordinator, made a statement on behalf of the Eastern European Group covering a wide range of past activities and comprehensive elements concerning future expectations;

(d) The Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan has served as the member of the Ad hoc Working Group on Situations which Reveal a Consistent Pattern of Gross Violations of Human Rights;

(e) Azerbaijan has contributed and actively supported the work of the Working Group on the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;

(f) Azerbaijan maintains its support and contribution to the work of the intergovernmental working group on the effective implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, consistently taking part in its discussions;

(g) During the formal and informal meetings of and consultations in the working groups established within the Human Rights Council to consider the review and rationalization of the special procedures, Azerbaijan has actively contributed to the discussions, trying to strike a balance between diverging views and genuinely working towards the compromise solutions to various outstanding and pressing issues;

(h) During the sixth session of the Human Rights Council, Azerbaijan initiated the adoption of the resolution on the Protection of cultural rights and property in situations of armed conflict, which received the unanimous support of the Council;

(i) During the seventh session of the Human Rights Council, Azerbaijan put forward a draft resolution on missing persons, which was adopted by consensus;

(j) Azerbaijan has supported the adoption at the Human Rights Council of the draft legally binding instrument for the protection of all persons from enforced disappearances. Azerbaijan has also extended its support for the adoption, by the Council, of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;

(k) Azerbaijan continues its close cooperation with OHCHR, in particular through a technical cooperation project on strengthening of capacities and infrastructure for the protection and promotion of human rights in Azerbaijan. The second phase of this project was successfully completed at the end of 2006 and the Government of Azerbaijan expressed its interest to continue cooperating with OHCHR to further benefit from its technical and consultative expertise.

19. The following information regards the cooperation of Azerbaijan with the human rights treaty monitoring bodies:

(a) Azerbaijan has already fulfilled the implementation of the recommendations contained in the concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the second periodic report of the Government under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and, following the Committee's recommendation, established the Republican Coordinating Council dealing with children under the auspices of the State Committee for Family, Women and Children's Affairs in 2007;

(b) The combined second and third periodic report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was submitted in January 2007 and the Government of Azerbaijan continues to implement the recommendations contained in the concluding observations of the Committee;

(c) In 2007, Azerbaijan submitted its third periodic report under the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;

(d) In 2007, Azerbaijan submitted its initial report under the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families;

(e) In 2007, Azerbaijan submitted its third periodic report under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;

(f) In 2008, Azerbaijan submitted its combined fifth and sixth periodic report under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination;

(g) In 2008, Azerbaijan submitted its fourth periodic report under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;

(h) In 2008, Azerbaijan submitted its initial reports under the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

20. Azerbaijan ratified the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, as pledged in its initial application for membership to the Human Rights Council;

21. Azerbaijan continues to enhance its collaboration with relevant regional organizations, in particular the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), with a view of ensuring full and efficient promotion and protection of human rights, and takes steps towards improving current legislative framework in the relevant fields. In this regard, in 2007, Azerbaijan submitted its initial report under the European Social Charter (revised) adopted under the framework of the Council of Europe.

22. In line with its commitment to fully and effectively implement its obligations under the international and regional treaties and other documents to which it is a party, Azerbaijan pledges:

At the national level, to:

- Maintain constructive dialogue and cooperation with the special procedures of the Human Rights Council and to extend a standing invitation to all special procedure mandate holders.
- Consider ratification of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.
- Submit the combined third and fourth periodic report under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Submit the next periodic report under the European Social Charter (revised) concerning the application of accepted provisions belonging to the thematic group on health, social security and social protection.
- Submit the national report on the implementation of human rights obligations for the universal periodic review of the Human Rights Council to be held at the fourth session of the working group on the review in 2009.
- Continue implementation of the national action plan on the protection of human rights for 2006-2010.

- Continue implementation of the State programme on the improvement of living conditions and increased employment of refugees and internally displaced persons, including the amendments thereto made by the presidential decree dated 31 October 2007.
- Continue close cooperation with OHCHR in order to strengthen national capacity and fill gaps in the protection and promotion of human rights, in particular with regard to the rule of law and adequate protection for vulnerable groups.
- Continue its cooperation with the human rights treaty monitoring bodies.
- Further enhance collaboration with relevant regional organizations, in particular the Council of Europe and OSCE, with a view to ensuring full and efficient promotion and protection of human rights, especially in the spheres of media and elections, and to take further steps towards improvement of current legislative framework in relevant fields.

At the international level, to:

- Take an active part in the work of the Human Rights Council by promoting development of human rights norms by the Council and by contributing to new international cooperation programmes and initiatives on human rights.
- Cooperate with all stakeholders to promote and protect human rights universally, inter alia, through dialogue, the exchange of expertise, technical cooperation and advice, proceeding from indivisibility and interrelatedness of all human rights, including the right to development.
- Further contribute to broadening the dialogue among civilizations, cultures and religions.
- Endeavour to rationalize and strengthen the system of special procedures.
- Continue to actively participate in the work of the Preparatory Committee of the Durban Review Conference, as well as to contribute to the work of the Conference itself.
- Take an active part in discussions on the reform of the United Nations human rights treaty monitoring bodies.
- Provide financial support to the relevant human rights bodies of the United Nations system, in particular those responsible for child protection, gender equality and the protection of vulnerable groups, and strive for improved and effective coordination among such bodies.

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Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of eighteen members of the Human Rights Council

Letter dated 25 March 2009 from the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

I have the honour to inform you that the Government of Belgium has submitted its candidature to the Human Rights Council for the period from 2009 to 2012, in advance of the elections to be held in May 2009.

Please find attached a document containing the voluntary human rights pledges and commitments of Belgium, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) Jan **Grauls**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations

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Annex to the letter dated 25 March 2009 from the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Introduction

1. Belgium maintains worldwide commitments to promote and protect human rights and is convinced that civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated.

2. The promotion of human rights is a priority in the domestic and foreign policy of Belgium. Human rights are an integral part of the actions we take on the international stage, based on the conviction that full respect for all human rights makes them mutually reinforcing and that this respect is essential for the respect of the human dignity of each individual.

3. As a founder Member of the United Nations, Belgium has promoted and protected human rights for a very long time. Belgium is always ready to collaborate with all other States to improve the situation of human rights.

4. Those many years of commitment are notably reflected in membership of the former Commission on Human Rights (1947-1950, 1952-1954, 1958-1960, 1986-1991, 2001-2003) and the Commission on the Status of Women (1956-1958, 1970-1980, 1995-2011). Belgium currently serves as chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women.

5. The policy of Belgium clearly establishes the link between peace and security, development and human rights, the three pillars of the United Nations. Belgium is convinced that the promotion and protection of human rights are essential to the achievement of peace, security and development.

6. To contribute actively to international efforts to ensure greater respect for human rights, and to raise the profile of our activities in the area of human rights, Belgium has submitted its candidature to the United Nations Human Rights Council for the period from 2009 to 2012. Belgium has played an active role in the work of the Council since its establishment. With this candidature, Belgium hopes to strengthen further its commitment and to show its determination to cooperate with an energetic and effective Human Rights Council.

7. Moreover, Belgium's envisaged participation in the Council's work will be of greater significance in the second half of 2010 when Belgium assumes the presidency of the European Union.

8. As a member of the Human Rights Council, Belgium pledges to continue to play an important role in the effective promotion and protection of human rights.

1. To participate actively in all the activities of the Human Rights Council

9. Since the Human Rights Council is essential to the prevention of human rights abuses and to human rights promotion, Belgium will be actively involved in any activities to enhance its functioning. Belgium will ensure that the Council, which also plays a key role in the fight against human rights violations, will nurture the discussion of specific situations and thematic issues as required.

10. Convinced that maintaining and strengthening the system of special procedures is fundamental to the promotion and protection of human rights, Belgium will strive to guarantee the independence of those special procedures.

11. Belgium will continue to collaborate fully with the special procedures in accordance with its commitment to receive them within its territory whenever they so request. In recent years, Belgium has been visited by the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent (2006) and the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (2000).

12. As in the past, Belgium pledges to respond quickly to communications from special rapporteurs to ensure active follow-up to the recommendations they make.

13. Belgium's report for its universal periodic review in 2011 will, in accordance with its normal policy, be prepared on the basis of a transparent and inclusive approach involving civil society including non-governmental organizations.

14. Furthermore, Belgium will continue to play an active role to ensure that the universal periodic review becomes an effective and robust instrument of the Human Rights Council that will lead to tangible improvements in the situation of human rights on the ground. In that regard, Belgium will make every effort necessary to ensure enhanced, constructive and transparent dialogue among States.

15. In accordance with its own practice, Belgium will continue to pay special attention to civil society and will ensure that it remains actively associated with the work of the Human Rights Council.

2. To support and strengthen the other bodies of the United Nations human rights system

16. Alongside the Human Rights Council, the work of the Third Committee of the General Assembly of the United Nations should continue to make a dynamic contribution to the promotion, protection and defence of human rights.

17. Therefore, Belgium will continue to support this universal body so it can stimulate and advance the treatment of thematic and geographic questions and enhance the implementation of human rights standards.

18. Belgium pledges, furthermore, to continue to encourage the universal ratification and effective implementation of the main human rights treaties.

19. Belgium has supported the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights since its establishment and will resolutely pursue that course. The Office's independence and impartiality, which are essential to the role it plays in the promotion and protection of human rights, must be preserved.

20. Belgium is one of the main donors of the Office of the High Commissioner. Two thirds of its contributions are not earmarked and the rest is specifically set aside to support the system of special procedures, the Fund for Victims of Torture and the Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery. The contribution of Belgium is spread over a multi-year commitment.

21. Belgium attaches great importance to the effective functioning of the treaty bodies of the United Nations human rights system.

22. Belgium will continue to cooperate fully with the different committees; it will submit its periodic reports in a timely fashion, engage in an interactive dialogue with members of the committees during its oral presentations and actively follow up on their recommendations.

23. Belgium transmitted its fifth periodic report on the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 2008 and has recently submitted its third periodic report on the Convention on the Rights of the Child to the treaty body concerned.

24. The second report on the implementation of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and the fifth and sixth combined report of Belgium on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, have recently been examined by the relevant committees.

25. In this context, Belgium also attaches great importance to open and constructive dialogue with civil society.

3. Enhanced action in the sphere of human rights

26. Renewed attention will be paid to all victims of human rights violations, especially children, women, human rights defenders and the victims of all forms of discrimination, torture, sexual violence and human trafficking.

27. The fight against all forms of racism and discrimination remains one of the major priorities of Belgian policy. All potential victims of racism, discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance must receive the same attention and the same protection.

28. Convinced that a society's diversity can become a key to its success, Belgium advocates an open and tolerant society, in which all people must be able to find a place.

29. Against the background of its active participation at the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (Durban, South Africa, 2001), and as a member of the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee, Belgium is closely involved in the preparatory process for the Durban Review Conference to be held in April 2009.

30. At the sixty-third session of the General Assembly, Belgium sponsored jointly with Slovenia, the biennial resolution on the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Belgium underlines with its sponsorship the importance it attaches to this Convention and to its implementation.

31. It is crucial for counter-terrorism efforts to pay due regard to human rights and Belgium is committed to guaranteeing the fundamental rights of the individual under its own domestic counter-terrorism legislation. Belgium will continue to work to ensure that respect for human rights is built into international counter-terrorism efforts.

32. The dynamic stance taken by Belgium in its foreign policy and development cooperation policy to encourage the consolidation of the rule of law and the fight against impunity will be pursued. Special attention will be given to strengthening its support for initiatives and plans that contribute to promoting human rights in this

particular area. Belgium's involvement in the Third Committee as a sponsor of the resolution on the elimination of violence against women, which concentrated this year on the fight against impunity, is a priority for the country. The protection of women victims of sexual violence calls for even greater vigilance.

33. Convinced of the importance of the value added of solid regional systems, especially to strengthen the universality of human rights, Belgium will continue to advocate for regional systems for the promotion and protection of human rights, both in the Third Committee of the General Assembly and in the Human Rights Council. On the initiative of Belgium, a seminar on the theme was held in Geneva on 24 and 25 November 2008.

4. To revitalize the promotion and protection of human rights at the national level

34. Belgium pledges to respect the obligations arising from the ratification of various human rights treaties and acknowledges that there is still room for improvement in that regard at the national level.

35. Belgium has ratified the main human rights treaties[1] and is currently doing everything it can to ratify without delay the legal instruments adopted recently, namely the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol thereto.

36. Belgium has participated actively in the preparation of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and will accede to it as soon as it is adopted by the General Assembly.

37. The achievement of the eight Millennium Development Goals is the central element of Belgium's development cooperation activities. Belgium has pledged to comply by 2010 with the United Nations requirement that industrialized countries should allocate 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product to official development assistance. Equality between men and women, the fight against sexual violence, the rights of the child, the situation of children in armed conflict and climate change are the main priorities for Belgium development cooperation. Belgium development cooperation is founded on a results-based approach.

38. To turn its pledges into concrete benefits for human rights protection, Belgium has adopted various national action plans that provide a reference framework for the definition of its policies. Some examples are listed below:

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[1] International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1983), the First Optional Protocol thereto (1994), the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Aiming at the Abolition of the Death Penalty (1998), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1983), International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1975), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1985), Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (2004), Convention on the Rights of the Child (1991), Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (2002), Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (2006), and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1999).

(a) The federal poverty-reduction plan was adopted in July 2008. Although Belgium is privileged in terms of economic and social development, this plan acknowledges that not all citizens of our country share that prosperity equally. This action plan aims to offer everybody the possibility of living a decent life, as guaranteed in article 23 of the Belgium Constitution.

(b) The national plan of action against domestic violence (2008-2011). The plan covers a form of violence that not only affects the direct victim but also other family members, especially children. Under this plan, each federal minister undertakes, within the framework of his or her policies, to define a strategic goal that contributes to the promotion of equality between men and women.

(c) Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), the national plan of action concerning women, peace and security was developed towards the end of 2008.

(d) The national plan of action against human trafficking, covering the period from 2008-2011, was adopted in 2008.

(e) The national plan of action against racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia was adopted in 2004, as part of the efforts to implement the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

39. Belgium has established various institutions that have a broad mandate for the promotion, respect and defence of human rights, including the centre for equal opportunities and the fight against racism, the institute for the equality of women and men and the new national commission for the rights of the child, established in 2007.

40. Belgium will continue to hold and give priority to open and critical dialogue with regard to its human rights policy with the special rapporteurs and various representatives of civil society, including representatives of non-governmental organizations.